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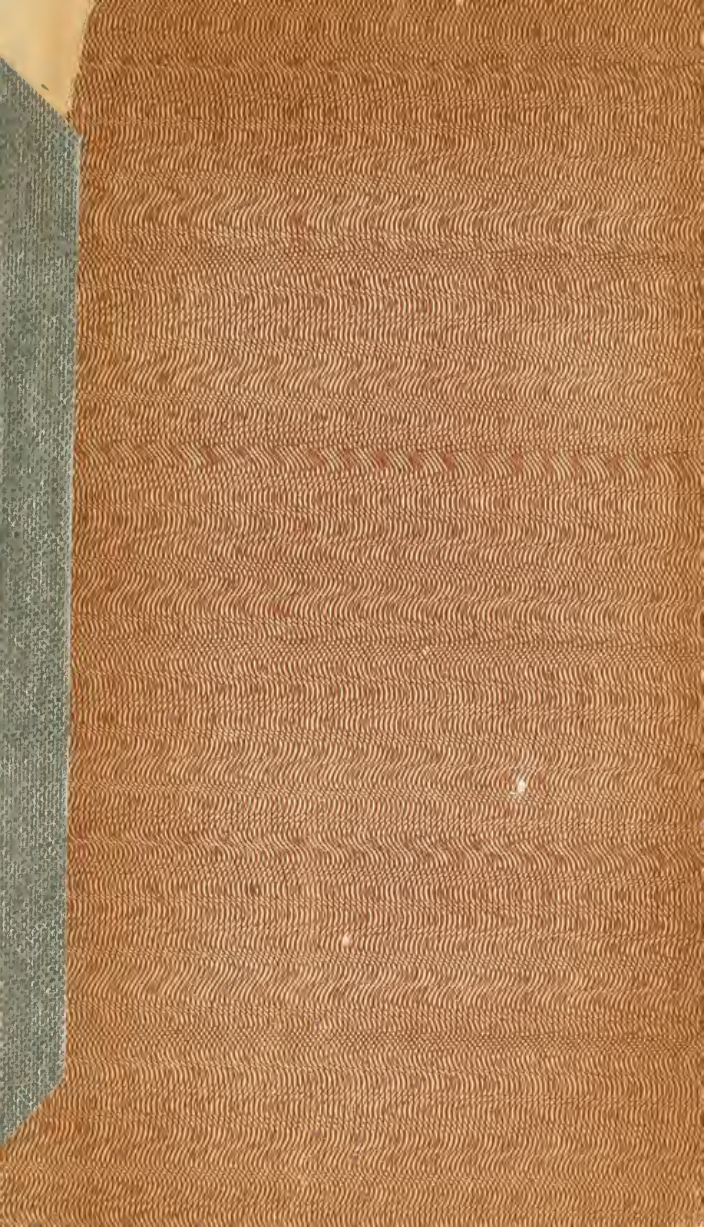
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A score of lyrics



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A SCORE OF LYRICS.



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A

SCORE OF LYRICS.

By Wm. G. Clark

Cambridge :

MACMILLAN, BARCLAY, AND MACMILLAN
LONDON : WILLIAM PICKERING.

MDCCCXLIX.

LONDON.

GEORGE BARCLAY, Castle Street, Leicester Square.

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I.

THE BRIDAL.

'Tis yet two hours by the convent clock

Until the matin song ;

Alas ! sweet sister Ursula,

The night is weary long.

One sorrow, wakeful at my heart,

Forbids me still to sleep,

My eyeballs throb, and ache, and burn —

Blest are the eyes that weep !

A thousand times my tale I tell,
To thy meek, patient ear ;
For still the telling seems to lift
The weight of woe I bear.

Ah, well do I remember me
How cheerily arose
The morrow that was destined
To see so dark a close.

Came belted knights with sword and plume,
And dames in fair array,
Came all the cousins of our house,
To greet my bridal day.

They gathered round me in a ring,
And whispered words of cheer ;
But I heard them not, so loud my heart
Was throbbing in mine ear.

My swimming eyes were with the gush
Of mingled feelings dim.
Seeing and hearing nought beside,
I watched and watched for HIM.

The morning waned. Marvelled the dames,
And I might hear them say :
“ Brave knight should never laggard be
Upon his wedding-day.”

Noon came. My father's brow grew dark,
But spake he never a word ;
With a muttered curse my brother laid
His hand upon his sword.

But gradual on my heart there fell
A chill like utter death ;
For I thank my God I never once
Misdoubted of his faith.

'Twas evening when a tramp of feet
Came sounding up the stair,
As if of men who wearily
Some heavy burden bare.

Now near and nearer, slow and slow,
Up the great corridor—
And there in a bloody winding-sheet
They laid him on the floor.

Fell men had met him in the wood,
All on his bridal day ;
They struck him down from off his horse.
And slew him where he lay.

They slew him for his golden ring,
The ring for me he bare ;
Alas! they might have spared him,
For love of his golden hair.

* * * * *

Sometimes I may my memory cheat,
And half the past recall ;
Dreaming I am as once I was
Before the wreck of all.

Oft, too, in visions of the night—
But the truth dawns with day—
O God, that I were mad outright,
And dreamed that dream alway !

II.

THE WANDERERS

Now the world is all before us,
Outcasts we from hearth and home ;
West to Andes, east to Taurus,
Still together will we roam.

Weep not thou for sire or mother,
Nor for broken duty grieve ;
They had given to another
That which was not theirs to give.

Who the ties of blood preferreth
To affection's holier chains ?
'Tis the beating heart that stirreth
All the pulses of the veins.

Soon shall brighter, happier places,
Chase the memory of this ;
Soon, it may be, kinder faces
Smile thee back again to bliss.

Wintry be our sky, or vernal,
Love shall bloom in any clime —
Love almighty, love eternal,
Laughs to scorn the might of time.

Cold though be the road before us,
All the closer we will cling ;
Dark though be it, hovering o'er us,
Love shall spread his sunlit wing.

III.

TO THE MONKS OF ST. BERNARD.

FATHERS, may Heaven ever bless
You and your work, who thus supply
In savage places courtesy,
And plenty in the wilderness !

O more than charity ! to feed
Those in whose feasts ye cannot share,
For joys of man to take no care,
And yet relieve him in his need.

O more than heroism ! to fly
The life that wooes on either hand,
Green sunny vales of Switzerland,
Far-purpling plains of Italy.

Others, your peers in age, are hale,
Their strength is in its manly prime,
Your brows are furrowed as with time,
Your eyes are dim, your cheeks are pale.

The world, with all its sorrows, less
Can smite the strong, can blight the fair,
Than all your calling hath to bear,
Storm, and unrest, and loneliness.

And yet methinks those eyes, else dim,
Shine with a bright reflex from heaven —
God's smile of cheer on men who've striven
Aye to stand face to face with Him.

Soldiers of Christ, keep faithful guard
Upon your Alpine watchtower high ;
The lips have said that cannot lie,
“ Ye shall not lack your due reward.”

Till every land shall learn the story
Of your self-sacrificing days,
Man shall requite with grateful praise,
And God with crowns of fadeless glory.

IV.

GOLD.

GOLD is ruddy, gold is rare ;

Sons of men the wide world thorough
Scale for gold the lion's lair,

Delve for gold where conies burrow.

Gathered in with toil and care,

From the mead, the fold, the furrow :
Garnered up for many a year,

Down to one dark day of sorrow ;
To be scattered by the heir,

On the jocund, sunny morrow

V.

COR CORDIUM.

A COURT lawn-paven girt with cloisters grey ;
 Therein a boy fair as mid-spring, at gaze
With eye unflinching in the face of day,
 Scares the old echoes with untutored lays.

A vessel steering toward a foreign strand ;
 Upon the deck, half-mad with misery,
He walks alone, and curses with clenched hand
 Those white cliffs sinking o'er the Northern Sea.

A winding bay of Italy—and, lo !

True woman, one white arm around him thrown,
Thaws the heart's thick-ribbed ice and bids it flow
In music, for he is no more alone.

That lady stands on the sea-marge of moss,
Smiling adieu, " For ere the day be fled
He will return ;" and as some albatross
Swoops to the wave with snow-white wings outspread.

He springs his bark, full-sailed, to ocean's breast.
Oh, heed yon creeping mist, yon gathering roar !
It comes—'tis gone—I see the waters waste,
And one with clasped hands gazing from the shore !

A place of graves where streets were thronged of yore ;
One quiet nook shaded with cypress tall ;
Fail, Rome ! the holier by one relic more !
The Heart of hearts sleeps 'neath thy ruined wall.

VI.

WESTWARD. HO !

RIGHT merry it was in broad England
In the days of the Confessor,
Where, free from shame and felon-brand,
A man might rove the forest o'er,
And track his game by garth and moor ;
For the laws weighed all with an even hand
In the days of the Confessor.

And still 'twas merry for fair England
In the days of Robin Hood ;
'Though the Norman ruled o'er strath and strand,

Yet the fell was wide and thick the wood,
And the Saxon bow was stout and good :
Oh ! little scath had the gallant band
That went with Robin Hood !

But, alas ! Old England's prime is flown,
'T is merry now no more,
When the land is growing to one vast town,
When they fence the copse and mete the moor.
And, spurned from all save the prison-door,
A man needs flee, for place there is none
Where he might be free and poor.

Then, hey ! for a life wild, uncontrolled.
In prairies yet untrod !
Where the hand that's strong, with a heart that's bold,
Has nobler work than to delve the clod,
Or cringe 'neath laws at rich men's nod
Repealing Nature's fiat old,
And stinting the gifts of God.

VII.

EARLY DEATH.

WHY mourn for them whom Death hath summoned soon

Better to rest at once from happy play

Than live to toil o'er-wearied ere the noon,

Hour after hour throughout the lingering day.

THEN, in the rosy distance, forms of light

Beckoned us onward up the shining hill,

Promising gentler slopes and skies more bright—

O Life! O Hope! our path toils upward still!

Fades the soul's sunshine, and that pictured show

Mourning we see in cold, grey clouds depart,

While even childhood's blessed memories grow

Fainter and fainter on the hardening heart.

Youth feasts star-crowned in the Halls of Jove,
Hebe's own hand commends the nectar rare,
The Nine hymn round him, and the Queen of Love
Twines her white fingers fondly in his hair.

Now lies the lyre in dust, its chords unstrung,
Shattered the wine-cup late with rapture rife ;
Who would survive the Past's dull wrecks among,
Himself a wreck, and, lying, call it " Life ? "

Say not man wakes, and so of life doth deem
More truly than the child ; we do but pass
Forth from a healthful to a feverish dream ;
The playmate of the butterfly that was

Is saddened now. Stream stagnates into fen,
And sunny uplands change to cheerless heath—
Oh ! to dream on that first fair dream, and then
Wake to the grand realities of Death !

VIII.

THE LONELY GRAVE.

THERE'S a grave on a headland high,
 Rifted in the rude lime-stone ;
Wail the night-winds sweeping by,
 And the waters make their moan.
But thy rocky bed is deep,
Wind nor waters break thy sleep.

Oft shall storms with gathered roar,
 Wild and wintry, scour the bay,
Rouse its waves, and o'er the moor
 Fling afar their crests of spray.
Ruder summons must it be
That from slumber waketh thee.

There is no kind hand that daily
Offerings to thy grave shall bring,
Deck it sadly, deck it gaily,
With a garland rife of Spring.
Can the rose's ruddy beam
Pierce to cheer thy darksome dream ?

No tall marble at thy head
Stands with legend graven fair,
Tells the virtues of the dead,
Tells the mourner's deep despair ;—
Recks the spirit far away
WHERE clay moulders into clay ?

Be thy grave upon the waste
Still unmarked, unvisited,
O'er thy memory thick and fast
Sighs are breathed and tears are shed :
This I know, bereft of thee,
All the world's a waste to me.

IX.

THRENOS.

BRIGHT lamps are round me, yet I see but gloom ;
 Their shouts of merriment my bosom rend,
My heart lies with thee in thy dark, cold tomb,
 My childhood's playmate and my manhood's friend

No more shall wondrous tale or legend rare
 Of deeds chivalric nurse our daylight dreams,
No more shall Hope and Fancy, busy pair,
 Fill the blank future with gay-broidered schemes.

Cold is the hand that straying o'er the strings
 Called forth their hidden fairy-world of sound,
Lifted our hearts to high and holy things,
 Or in voluptuous trance our senses bound.

The brook sings not so cheerily as of yore,
The young spring-leaf is withered and upcurled,
The rose is scentless and the sunbeam cold ;
Truly there's something wanting in the world.

*

*

*

Long had I striven to recall the dead,
Love's present void with memories to fill,
But in the hush I heard a voice which said,
Or seemed to say, " Submit thyself, be still.

So shalt thou find a charm to purge thine ear,
So mists of earth shall from thine eye be riven ;
Behold ! a new star in yon crystal sphere !
Hark ! a new voice amid the quires of Heaven ! "

X.

LA RENTRÉE GLORIEUSE.

THEY gave our people to the sword,
Our homesteads to the flame,
Then drave abroad the remnant
They spared for very shame.

But in our need God raised us up
Friends in the strangers' land,
Who welcomed to their hearts and gave
Gifts with an open hand.

They gave us of the mountain,

They gave us of the plain,

The highlands for our flocks and herds,

The lowlands for our grain.

Withal, at midnight as at noon,

At even as at morn,

Southward we turned our eyes and sighed

For the vales where we were born.

One holyday we sat and talked

Of our glories long ago ;

‘ We have yet stout hearts and the same good cause ! ’

Said bold Henri Arnaud.

We met, eight hundred boys and men,

In a lonely spot by night ;

We swore an oath, and called on Him

That aye defends the right.

Now onward in His holy name !

Now onward for the faith !

“ Nay,” said the kindly Genevese,

“ Why rush ye on your death ?”

We put aside the friendly grasp,

We sang a parting hymn,

And on we marched from early dawn

Till the light of eve grew dim.

The ninth day thence, with failing hearts,

We toiled our wastes of snow :

“ Lo, yonder are our mountain-tops !”

Cried stout Henri Arnaud.

We clomb the Mount St. Julien,

We saw our valleys dear,—

The eagle cowered on his nest

Listening our shout of cheer.

We halted on the high Balsille
As we saw the foe advance,
Full twenty thousand chosen men
Of Piedmont and of France.

Three days we fought the enemy,
Still swarmed their numbers round ;
On the third night, o'erworn with toil.
We sank upon the ground.

But on that night when, save Arnaud,
All deemed our cause but lost,
The God that smote Sennacherib
Sent discord 'mid their host.

And our Duke Victor bearded
The Frenchman where he stood,
And sware, " Henceforth no alien sword
Shall drink my people's blood !

“ And they shall have their valleys,
All they have lost, and more ;
I will their Father be, and they
My children as of yore.”

So we won back our valleys
In spite of friend and foe ;
Thanks be to God and our good swords
And brave Henri Arnaud !

La Tour, July 1847.

XI.

AN INCIDENT AT PERUGIA.

A TEMPLE to the King of kings.

And her who reigns above,

All blazoned with foreshadowings

Of God's accomplished love !

In central glory Jesus stands ;

The Virgin kneeling down,

With bended head and folded hands,

Waits meekly for her crown.

The martyrs with their palms are come,
The sainted and the shriven ;
The sinless child called early home,
The sinful man forgiven ;

The well-beloved, the sorely tried,
Who counted all but loss
So they might wander by His side
And follow to His cross.

* * * *

Lo ! sudden o'er my spirit's light
Swept mists of doubt and pride,
Conjured from hell by that foul sprite
That coils by Beauty's side :

"Thou worshippest the limner's thought ;
The mind then needs must be
(Creating thus thy gods from nought)
Itself Divinity."

Scarce fell the shadow o'er my mood,
When straight the sunlit floor
Was darkened, and behold ! there stood
An idiot at the door.

* * * *

Yes ! the rapt soul that soars alone
To heavenly ether free,
Must with the grovelling idiot own
Kindred humanity.

By one high Will the blind are blind.
And they that see do see,—
Bow 'neath that universal Mind.
Lord both of him and thee.

Is't clear within ? Bless we the light,
And use it while we may ;
Is't dark within ? Curse not the night,
But wait and hope for day.

One only saddest close to avoid
Still asks the trembling heart :
" Ere this my temple be destroyed
Let not its gods depart."

XII.

GWENTAVON GHYLL.

Ask ye what crazed the maiden's brain ?

It needs not that I tell again

That old, old tale of sadness,

Of innocence and guileless youth,

Of blinding passion, crime and ruth,

Desertion, scorn, and madness.

Oft on the church's northern side,

By a tiny grave at eventide,

She sate when all was still ;

But, shunning speech and sight of men.

By day she sought the narrow glen

They call Gwentavon Ghyll.

On either side to gaunt grey rock
Cling serpent-rooted birch and oak,
Coiling round every rift ;
Between, with roar like sprite distract,
In one foam-sheeted cataract
The stream its chasm hath cleft.

Far overhead the feathered pine
And stateliest larch all sunlit shine,
Wave breeze-stirred to and fro ;
Above, blue sky and branches green,
And glistening spray and summer sheen :
A black deep pool, below.

With wildered gaze she tracked each spot,
Like one that seeking findeth not,
Still seeketh day by day ;
That glen was all the world to her.
For, as the story went, 'twas there
The spoiler lured his prey.

Did fancy, gleaming o'er despair,
Haunt that sole stream as though it were
Type of her life and doom ;
How one mad passion-plunge may fling
From light and day, and breezy spring.
To depths of sunless gloom ?

Marked she a leaf with torrents' fray
New-chafed, how motionless it lay
Upon the pool's still breast,
And deemed that after life's rude shocks
In that calm haven 'neath the rocks
She too might be at rest ?

They sleep together side by side
The unbaptized, the suicide,
I' the churchyard's northern slope.
Leave them to Him who loved the poor,
With hope, which, though not "certain, sure,"
Is yet, for all that, Hope.

XIII.

I know of one whose heart is such,
Its chords so delicately strung,
That Nature's every lightest touch
Wakes it to sympathy and song.

I see her pausing ere she tread,
For fear her dainty foot should scath
The ant that trails his big white bead
Along the pebbled garden-path.

Brightest of all, she wakes to watch
The footprints of the climbing dawn ;
Sweetest, she wanders forth to catch
The violet's breath upon the lawn.

The faintest, farthest sounds, that swell
 From summer wave or woodland, hears
 That deep heart's depth where joy doth dwell
 With sadness, by the fount of tears.

Tears that 'neath fringed lid the while
 Droop tremulous as in act to fall,
 Still glisten each with lustrous smile,
 Like sunbeam pent in crystal ball.

Half-waking doth the baby god
 Hold with blind clasp her bosom thrall,
 That so it scattereth abroad
 The wealth ONE shall be dowered withal?

O fairest prize of after-fate !
 O blest above his brethren he,
 On whom that soul shall concentrate
 Its passionate intensity !

XIV.

THE TRYSTING-PLACE.

“ NAY, Lucy, never don thy cloak,
For the rain is beating still
Upon the broad boughs of our oak,
And the loud winds sweep the hill.

“ Thou must not to the kirk away
This Sabbath night so wild,
But let us twain together pray,
As in old days, my child.”

“ I care not for the beating rain,
And the winds upon the hill ;
This night there’s never hurricane
Shall bar me of my will.”

Weep, widowed mother, doubtfully,
To think what marvel strange
In her that wont so kind to be
Hath wrought such woeful change.

“ Nay, mother, heed not what I say
When angrily I speak,
Still let me feel when gone away
Thy kiss upon my cheek.”

Weep, widowed mother, she is gone,
Gone from thy cottage door ;
Henceforward shall thy darling one
Its threshold cross no more.

She follows not the kirkward path.

But turns her hastily

To where the hawthorn on the heath

Shews dark against the sky.

She goes all trust, his truth to prove,

Who hath by basest stealth

Beguiled from her more than love,

Robbed her of more than wealth.

He hath sworn to fly with her this night,

In some far land to hide

Her shame, and there with holiest rite

To wed her for his bride.

He waiteth for her by the tree—

Is that a lover's face?—

With spade and mattock—what do they

At lovers' trysting-place?

Lo he is digging ere she come
A pit both deep and wide ;
O man, is THAT ' the quiet home '
Thou promisedst thy bride ?

The gloom of night that deed did shroud,
Unseen of mortal eye,
And none might hear, for the storm was loud,
And drowned that dying cry.

But God hath given the winds a tongue,
And the stars have eyes to see,
And the murderer's bones on a gibbet hung
High o'er the hawthorn tree.

LONELINESS.

XV.

THE house was prosperous of yore.
And counted gallant knights a score
 Around their chief arrayed,
But they are 'minished, one by one,
And she at last is left alone,
 A richly dowered maid.

Her mother is a saint above,
Earth hath no portion in her love,
 And oftentimes she said,
“ Ah me, this world is weary wide,
Would in the low vault, side by side,
 I with my kin were laid ! ”

Yet gathered in her halls a crowd
Officious, — dames with praises loud.

And men with whispers low ;
Still walked she mid the throng alone ;
Their merry music changed its tone.

And spake to her of woe.

Till one there came whose earnest gaze
Aye followed her through crowded ways,

Sought her in lonely bower ;
Not for her castles, lands, or pelf —
He wooed her for her own sweet self
And heart, that priceless dower.

Each speaking glance, each thrilling word,
Far silent deeps of memory stirred,

And once again for her
That mother's voice caressed the child,
That mother's face above her smiled,
As in the days that were.

New hopes, new passions, from the tomb
Of dead affection sprang to bloom,
 Woody by such gentle breath ;
Love culled the flowers, and deftly now
Round throbbing breast and crimsoned brow
 Twines them for bridal wreath.

Like that lone dove far wandering,
Her soul that found no living thing
 To rest on, in the waste,
Now joyous hailed the sign which told
Of fairer skies and waters rolled
 From earth's green lap at last.

In a garden fair at eventide
The bridegroom paces with his bride,
 Hands linked lovingly ;
“ The world so waste and wide before,”
She said, “ is waste and wide no more—
 Thou art the world to me.”

XVI.

YONDER.

Our mirth had flashed as lightning bright.

Our songs had pealed like thunder—

There came a still small voice at night

That bade me follow yonder.

And now, when all is silence far,

I wake, and gaze, and wonder,

If every nearest brightest star

Be some friend watching yonder.

And whensoever the orb of day
Hath sunk the dark hills under,
There beckons one long past away
In rosy twilight yonder.

When skies are fair and friends are kind,
If chance my heart grow fonder
Of this dear earth, the summer wind
Whispers, " My home is yonder."

Then leave me ; I would gradual break
All earth-knit ties asunder,
That unrepining I may take
My lonely journey yonder.

XVII.

SONG.

SHE stood beside the rolling flood,
And I that loved stood by her ;
I plucked a freshly dawning bud
From off the trailing brier.

“ And take,” said I, “ this gift from me,
And think, as fades the flower,
That in my heart thy memory
Blooms brighter hour by hour.”

She sighed farewell, and I was gone —
I paused to gaze behind,
And saw her flinging, one by one,
The rose-leaves on the wind :

To flutter on the fickle wind,
To fall in the rolling river,
Then sink to depths where none may find
A trace of them for ever.

So smile a newer love to see,
So sigh if he depart,
And may he tear smiles, sighs, and thee,
As lightly from his heart.

XVIII.

THE TEACHING OF NATURE.

ONE curse still thrills night's silence through.

One shadow dims the day,

One sentence brands each fairest brow,—

“Thou too shalt pass away.”

The loveliest summer day declines

Toward a cheerless morrow,

And where the sun of joyaunce shines

Creeps on foreshade of sorrow.

Yet from the East, where coming night
Looms blackest, morn shall rise,
And 'neath the dead year's pall of white
The young Spring cradled lies.

Hoar frost may clothe the wint'ry bough
With foliage of its own,
And midnight hath more suns to show.
A thousand-fold, than noon.

The rain which stills the copse may wake
Old voices of the hills,
And glorify the moorland bleak,
All silver-veined with rills.

The light was born before the sun ;
And where that light had birth,
Far in pure ether, falls on none
The shadow of the earth.

To trust in heaven unchanging, holy,
Is sunshine to the breast,
Through foulest damps of melancholy,
Clear-streaming to the last.

Then mid all frosts, the heart of hearts
Pulses with life-blood warm ;
That beam an arch of hope imparts
To span—to crown the storm.

XIX.

EDEN.

O'ER fevered brow and thirsting heart
Sleep showered her kindly rain,
While I, on silent couch apart,
Gasped for her dews in vain.

The troubles of the day-time past
Thronged round me multiform,
The very haven of my rest
Was tossing with the storm.

Listless I read by flickering light
The prophet's earliest page,
The birth of time, that garden bright,
And the world's golden age.

My lamp had failed ; yet none the less
Sleep fled beyond my reach ;
At last my utter weariness
Did shape itself in speech :

“ Garden of Eden, blest abode,
How sweet through untold hours
Daylong thine incense rose to God
From congregated flowers.

“ Fairest of all, a chosen few
Shrank from the blaze of heaven,
And held aloft for lustral dew
Their jewelled cups at even.

“ Each in the twilight shining far,
 With all the Iris blent,
Shewed like a rival evening star
 In nether firmament.

“ All varied forms of loveliness,
 All colours rich and ripe—
No perfect grace, no mood of bliss,
 Lacked there its antitype.

“ Through all the harmonies of Nature
 No jarring dissonance ran,
She imaged in each perfect feature
 The perfectness of man.

“ But now the flowers are faint of hue
 That prank the mossy sward ;
Alas ! they have partaken too
 The fortunes of their Lord.

“ Now wildernesses wide and far
By broad Euphrates lie ;
Those swords of flame the portals bar
And mock the searching eye.”

Then Sleep's slow fingers snapt in twain
The thread sick fancy spun ;
At waking-hour 'twas knit again,
All bright with morning sun :—

“ Still footprints of departed day
Shine burnished in the west,
Still doth the faded earth display
Trace of her golden past.

“ For when the chosen place was made
To share its tenants' doom,
One flower of heavenly seed He bade
Bright amid ruin bloom.

“ Not sun-displayed to vulgar eyes,
But whosoe’er hath striven,
A new Prometheus timely wise,
To win a light from heaven.

“ Invisible to all the rest,
It shines in primal beauty
On him alone who makes his quest,
Lit by the lamp of duty.

“ There are on earth that know it well,
Though here no name ’tis given,
And never mortal tongue may tell
The name it bears in heaven.

“ Thereby the wilderness ye tread
Seems to the raptured sight,
A world-wide Eden, heaven-fed,
With rivers of delight.

“ O bind it to your bosom now,
A charm 'gainst hell's endeavour ;
So shall ye wear it on your brow.
A coronal for ever.

“ And not alone on distant hill,
In silent forest glade,
Mid woodland paths that onward still
Wind into deeper shade,

“ But green on the dusty ways of life,
Where countless feet have trode,
Untrampled springs with fragrance rife
That amaranth of God.”

XX.

GOOD NIGHT.

“ One of those same ‘ Goodnights.’ ”

SLEEP, for the day is setting
Down the lonely west ;
The birds, their song forgetting,
Fold their wings to rest.

Fear not for malice hatching
Covert schemes of hell ;
Love is beside thee watching—
Sleep, for all is well.

THE END.

GEORGE BARCLAY, Castle Street, Leicester Square, London.

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